XXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

We have received the following letters, addressd "To the Editor of the 'Ibis'":—

Takow, S.W. Formosa,
1 December, 1864.

Sir,—I have to address to you my monthly report of progress for the 'Ibis'. I must begin with an addition to the Chinese avifauna in the shape of

Merops philippensis, Linn., an immature specimen of which was shot at Swatow in the beginning of winter, and forwarded to me by Consul Caine. The morn of our researches here is yet grey, though the rosy hue of promise is commencing to tinge the horizon. I only reached this place on the 7th of November, but my net is already spread, and there is every prospect of a successful haul of new species, a few of which I hope to advise you of in my next letter.

On the 15th of November I procured a fine male *Circus spilonotus*, Kaup; and on a subsequent occasion I watched two females, which, however, fought shy of me. The male was shot by a friend between this place and Taiwanfoo. Its total length was 21 inches; tail 9·75 in.; tarse 3·5 in., feathered down the front for about 1·25 in.; middle toe and claw 2·5 in. Legs rich chrome-yellow, ochreous on the tarsi. This specimen is more mature than that figured in the 'Ibis' (1863, Plate V.), the tibial feathers and under parts from the breast downwards being pure white. The feathers of the breast have narrow black medial streaks; the head, especially its sides and cheeks, is blacker; and the wings are greyer than in the subject of the plate. There is no nearer approach to the appearance of *C. melanoleucus* in the upper parts. From the state of the quills in this specimen, this species appears to have an autumnal moult.

This part of Formosa scarcely feels the north-east monsoon, and consequently its winter is almost tropical. Many birds that in Southern China and Tamsuy are only summer visitants, are here daily to be met with now, and, I suspect, all the winter through. *Rhynchæa sinensis,* sive *bengalensis,* sive *capensis* (for they all appear to be one and the same species) is not uncommon.

I have handled three, two males and one female. They vary greatly in size, but the female is the largest. They are all in the same dress—the *green* plumage, which appears to be the winter garb, and not, as I had supposed, peculiar to the male alone. Bill yellowish-olive; legs greenish-yellow; eyes brown-black. I dissected two males and one female of this species. In neither sex was the trachea convoluted. There were, of course, no laryngeal muscles; the bronchial tubes were very short, their osseous rings being thicker and more widely set than in the trachea; each tube was separated from the trachea by a triangular membrane, ossified round, except at the apex. The testes were ·4 in. long by nearly ·2 in. broad, longo-ovate, the right one the smaller. Stomach oval, 1·2 in. long, ·9 in. at greatest breadth, and ·7 in. at greatest depth, shaped like two saucers inverted face to face, with large lateral radiating tendons. Epithelium thick, containing *detritus* of marine shells and one small univalve entire. The contents of the stomachs of both males were exactly the same. The intestine was 21 inches long, and from ·25 to ·15 in. wide. Cæca situated 1·1 in. and 1·3 in. from the anus, about ·18 in. long and ·1 in. wide, rather thicker at apical end. About 8·25 in. from anus occurs a curious conical maggot-like excrescence on the intestine, ·4 in. long by ·15 in. at its base. Is this a supplementary cæcum placed on the small intestine? The proventriculus is smooth on its external coat. The large female had only 20 inches of intestine, and the curious cæcal appendage occurred about 8·75 in. from the anus. Right cæcum situated 1·2 in. from anus, and 2·3 in. long; left one rather higher up, and 2·5 in. long; both vermiform. Stomach contained small *Crustacea*, and one small black pebble.

A *Gallinago burka*, ♂, with fourteen tail-feathers, examined on the 24th of November, had the bill yellowish-olive for two-thirds of its length; apical part deep brown. The legs are light olive-ochre, touched at the joints with grey; claws black. Total length 10·75 in.; bill, from forehead, 2·6 in.; wing 5·2 in.; tail 2·5 in.; bare part of tibia ·6 in.; tarse 1·2 in.; middle toe and claw 1·4 in. Bronchi comparatively longer than in *Rhynchæa*; their rings rather thinner than those of the trachea; the triangular membranous interval wanting, the tracheal rings coming quite down to the last peaked ring, which is more than double the thickness of the others. Proventriculus externally granulose. Stomach somewhat small and heart-shaped, ·8 in. long by ·55 in. wide; contents, green juice and grit. Intestine thin, 12 inches long, and carrying the maggot-shaped cæcal appendage, which was ·3 in. long, at 5 inches from anus. At 1 inch from anus the true cæca occur; these are from 1 to 1·1 inch long, and vermiform. *Gallinago media* of Europe has *fourteen* tail-feathers, and, as I learn from Temminck's 'Manuel' (vol. iv. p. 433), *G. brehmi* has *sixteen*. Our bird therefore cannot be referred to this last. The rarer bird that I have met with having only *twelve*, must, I suppose, be referred to the variety *G. delamottii* of Baillon*.

A *Gallinago stenura*, ♂ (Nov. 24), has eight long thin lateral rectrices, and ten median ones, the sixth from the middle on either side being much thinner than the five proper ones, and the total number of tail-feathers twenty. Five to seven is the usual number of lateral feathers. The bill has the basal half light olive, the apical deep brown. Legs similar to the foregoing; head higher, with rounder forehead. Length 10 in.; bill, from forehead, 2·15 in.; wing 5 in.; tail 2 in.; bare part of tibia ·4 in.; tarse 1·25 in.; middle toe and claw 1·5 in. The cæca proper are placed 2 inches from anus, like small ears, nearly ·2 in. long, adovate, one slightly higher than the other. About 7·5 in. from anus occurs the peculiar excrescence before mentioned; it is ·4 in. long. Intestine 17 inches long. Proventriculus smooth; stomach small and heart-shaped.

In *Gallinago solitaria*, Hodgson (*G. megala*, mihi), I found the same short cæca as in *G. stenura*, but I appear to have overlooked the excrescence on the intestine. These two last Snipes are closely connected in their external form, the one being larger and having fewer rectrices, especially the thin lateral ones, than the other. They both differ from *G. burka* in the narrowness of the apical portion of the bill, and in the close zigzag streaking of the under wing-coverts, as also in the high and rounded shape of the head. In the presence of the small tympanic membrane, dividing the trachea from each bronchus, they approach *Rhynchæa*; but in the length of cæca that form is approached more nearly by *G. media*, while at the same time this is alienated from the other two, whose cæca are very minute. All these, however, have the same kind of stomach, while that of *Rhynchæa* wanders off in shape towards that of the *Rallidæ*. They all agree, I suspect, in having the curious cæcal excrescence. *Rhynchæa*, as might be guessed from the want of nervous development at the tip of the bill, is more a surface-feeder than the true Snipes, and, as I have found, feeds on small mollusks and crustaceans: hence the need of the powerful stomach.

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* We have never had the pleasure of inspecting an undoubted specimen of the supposed *G. brehmi*; but we should like to know in what way it differs from the American *G. wilsoni*, which also has *sixteen* rectrices. The greater length of the external feathers, on which Sir William Jardine dwells as a characteristic of the supposed *G. brehmi* (Contrib. Orn. 1849, p. 134; and *ibidem*, 1850, p. 17), does not seem to us to be an important feature. *G. delamottii*, with only *twelve* rectrices, *may be*, we think, founded on specimens of the common *G. media* which, being obtained in the moulting-season, have their tails imperfect.—Ed.

The sternum of *G. stenura* is larger and longer, especially in the keel, than that of *G. burka*, and the crest of its keel is more protracted and protrudes further forward beneath the apex of the furculum. It has not the tubercular excrescence that distinguishes the upper or concave line of the crest of the keel in *G. burka*. In other respects the two bones are very much alike, except in some trifling points, which may be attributed to differences in age or sex. I have not got a sternum of *G. solitaria* by me.

The sternum of *Rhynchæa* is Snipe-like. The female's is nearly one-third longer than that of the larger male. The most striking differences are:—The lateral bony support of the single open foramen, which is very short and weak in the true Snipes, is, in this bird, strong, and advances to nearly the level of the hind-line of the sternum. The concave edge of the keel, instead of protruding the crest, lies nearly within the vertical plane. The apex of the furculum is a little outside the plane of the crest, instead of being pushed well within it. The coracoids are larger and more dilated at their basal wings, and the scapulars are a fair bit longer.

A Rail (*Rallus striatus*) that I examined had the remains of grasshoppers in its stomach.

I shot a female *Dendrocitta sinensis*, var., the other day. It was sitting in the middle of a large tree, uttering a loud hoarse chatter. Its stomach contained remains of *Coleoptera*, and several hard black seeds.

Anthus richardi is pretty common here. *Buphus coromandus* is scattered in small parties among cattle; a few yellow feathers still remain about their heads at this season.

The Button-Quails (*Turnix*) bother me immensely; but I will not trouble you with any remarks till I find some clue to unravel the mystery of their variations.

If I have dwelt too long on the Snipes, pardon my garrulity. It is a subject that interests me much.

I am, &c.,
ROBERT SWINHOE.

Auckland House, Willesden,
February 24, 1865.

SIR,—As Mr. A. G. More, in his paper "On the Distribution of Birds in Great Britain during the Nesting-season" (Ibis, 1865, pp. 1–27), does not mention Subprovince 8 as a locality for the Pied Flycatcher, I copy the following from the 'Flora of Harrow' (London: 1864), p. 99:—

"Pied Flycatcher. (*Muscicapa atricapilla*.)

"I know of one authenticated instance of the occurrence of this rare bird here: a nest with three eggs was taken in the Grove, about the year 1836, and the eggs are still preserved."

I am, &c.,
CHARLES B. WHARTON.

SIR,—I have read with much pleasure Mr. Tristram's notes on the nesting of *Cypselus galilæensis*, Antinori, published in the last Number of the 'Ibis' (page 76 *et seq.*). As I am now engaged in preparing some notes on the species of this genus for a paper to be read before the Zoological Society, it may interest your readers to learn that, by aid of specimens submitted to my examination by several friends and correspondents, I have ascertained that the range of this Swift is a very extensive one. In the first place, I find it impossible to separate the Palestine bird from the Indian *Cypselus affinis*, Gray (see Jerdon's 'Birds of India,' vol. i. p. 177). Specimens in Mr. Gould's possession, obtained by Captain Burgess in the Deccan, seem absolutely inseparable from those in Mr. Tristram's collection. This Swift, therefore, as recorded by Jerdon, is found all over the peninsula of India, from the Himalayas to the extreme south, including Ceylon. There are specimens from Kurrachee in the British Museum. It is likewise found throughout the continent of Africa, excepting the northern parts. Antinori, its first discoverer in Palestine, records its occurrence in Sennar. Hemprich and Ehrenberg found it in Abyssinia; and upon their specimens Streubel established his species *Cypselus abyssinicus* (Isis, 1848, p. 354). Under the latter name, it will be found figuring in Hartlaub's well known volume on the 'Birds of Africa.' Mr. Otto Finsch, the Curator of the Ornithological Collection at Bremen, tells me that he cannot distinguish a West-African specimen, obtained in the Island of St. Thomas, from the Indian bird. And the same fact has been noticed by Sir William Jardine (Contrib. to Orn. 1849 and 1851). Lastly, there is a skin in the British Museum marked as from the Cape, and, as I am informed by Mr. Finsch, a specimen in the Bremen Collection from the same locality.

A nearly allied but perfectly distinct species, is *Cypselus subfurcatus*, Blyth, which ranges from China, through Siam, to Malacca and Sumatra. This appears to be the bird described and figured by Cassin (Proc. Acad. Philadelph. v. p. 58, pl. 13) as *C. leucopygialis*. These two species together form a distinct section of the genus *Cypselus*, distinguished from their brethren by their short, nearly square tail.

I am, Sir,
Yours, &c.,
P. L. Sclater.

11 Hanover Square,
March 1st, 1865.

March 22, 1865.

SIR,—In the 'Ibis' for 1863 (page 366) there is a note from me on the subject of *Accipiter virgatus* and *A. gularis.* I now find that, at the time of writing that note, I had not seen the true *A. gularis,* of which a pair has just been sent me by MM. Verreaux from the island of Formosa, together with a pair of *A. virgatus,* also from Formosa, thus proving that both species inhabit that island. On comparing the two species, it was at once evident that they could not be confounded, as, although the specimens of *A. gularis,* which appeared to be not fully adult, corresponded to some extent in their colouring with examples of *A. virgatus* of a similar age, they were fully one-third larger than the birds of the same sex in *A. virgatus*; and, moreover, the middle toe in *A. gularis* is somewhat shorter in proportion than in *A. virgatus.* I may here add that the middle toe of *A. virgatus* is of extraordinary length, considerably exceeding that of a neighbouring species of similar size, *A. rhodogaster,* from Celebes, which, in its turn, has the middle toe longer than that of the small Chinese Sparrow-Hawk, *A. stevensoni*; in fact the latter has the smallest and feeblest foot, in proportion to its size, of all the Sparrow-Hawks with which I am acquainted.

Of course, in comparing the above-named species, it is needful that the comparison should be made between individuals of the same sex. I am, &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Dr. G. Hartlaub has kindly sent us the following description of CHALCOPELIA BREHMERI, a new species of Pigeon from the Gaboon:—

"Supra intense ferrugineo-rufa, subtus dilutior, in lateritium vergens; capite cinereo, fronte pallidiore, *sincipite dilute rufescente*; gula obsolete fulvescente; remigibus nigricantibus, extus et (latius) intus rufescente limbatis; subalaribus et tertiariis rufis, his nigro fasciatim notatis; regione periophthalmica pallide rubescente: rectricibus quatuor mediis dorso concoloribus; *extima et secunda cinereis, fascia lata ante apicem dilute cinereum nigra notatis, extremo apice rufescente*; *tertia apice toto rufo*: rostro nigricante.

"Long. $8\frac{1}{2}''$; rostr. a fr. $7'''$; al. $4''\ 6'''$; caud. $4''$; tars. $11'''$.

"Nearly allied to *C. puella*, but differing in the reddish colour of the forehead and the rectrices. It is also smaller than *C. puella*.

"Spec. unic. in Mus. Bremens.

"Hab. Gaboon: Mr. Brehmer."

With reference to Mr. Sclater's note on *Dendrœca chrysoparia* (*anteà*, p. 87), that gentleman wishes us to state that the *second* example mentioned (p. 88) as being "without any label, but probably an immature male" of that species, was, as he has just heard from Mr. H. E. Dresser, shot by Mr. Dresser himself near San Antonio, Texas, and not received from Dr. Heermann. It is therefore, in all probability, to be referred to *D. virens*, having been shot in company with others of that species, and not to *D. chrysoparia*.

Mr. John Hancock has been kind enough to submit to our inspection the specimen of the Pipit in his collection, which we mentioned in our last Number (p. 116) as having been obtained in this country. This bird, which was shot from the nest at Chepstow, in Monmouthshire, 18th April, 1854, appears to us to be probably a female of *Anthus rupestris*, Nilsson, the differences between which and our own indigenous *Anthus obscurus*, however, seem to be so slight that we rather hesitate to regard them as forming specific characters. They consist, so far as we can ascertain, merely in the presence of a bright buff or pale cinnamon tinge on the breast of the male in *A. rupestris*, and, perhaps, in that form being of a slighter build than *A. obscurus*. In the female of the so-called *A. rupestris*, the warm colour is much more faintly indicated; in some specimens it is doubtful whether it exists at all. The outer tail-feathers, which in *Anthus spinoletta* afford so sure a diagnosis, are in *A. rupestris* just as dingy as in *A. obscurus*. Two Pipits, killed on the 7th March, 1864, near Norwich (see 'Zoologist,' p. 9109), have also been kindly lent us for comparison by Mr. Stevenson. One of them, which we suppose to be a male, exactly corresponds with males of *A. rupestris* from Sweden; the other, a presumed female, is hardly to be distinguished from females of *A. obscurus*; but the company she was keeping, at the time of her death, makes it probable that she also should be referred to *A. rupestris*. We imagine that the prevalent form of Rock-Pipit in Scandinavia is *A. rupestris*; but that *A. obscurus* occurs there as well we are assured by Mr. Hancock, who has also favoured us with the loan of a fine male *A. rupestris* from the neighbourhood of Dieppe. We trust our readers will give the subject their attention during the ensuing season, and will report to us their observations upon it.

In our last Number (*anteà*, p. 104) we suggested the possibility of the specimen of *Larus* or *Rhodostethia rossi*, which is now in the Derby Museum of Liverpool, being identical with that which is known to have been possessed by the late Mr. Joseph Sabine. We have since heard from Mr. T. J. Moore that he has made a search among Lord Derby's memorandums, and finds that the example now at Liverpool was obtained in the year 1835 from Mr. Gould; so that it is probably not identical with that of Mr. Sabine, who, prior to 1831 (F. B.-A. vol. ii. Introd. p. xii), had transferred his collection to the Andersonian Institution of Glasgow—where, however, we have looked, and looked in vain, for this valuable specimen, as well as for several others which we have reason to believe were formerly in that gentleman's possession. As the subject is one of some little interest, we should be glad if any of our readers could inform us whether this species was ever included in Mr. Sabine's contribution to the Andersonian Museum; and if it was, what has since become of it.

Mr. Osbert Salvin has called our attention to the fact that Mr. Lawrence's recently described *Corethrura guatemalensis* (*anteà*, p. 106) is, in all probability, identical with the already known *C. rubra* (Sclater and Salvin, P.Z.S. 1860, p. 300).

Mr. Edward Newton writes to us from Mauritius:—

"On reading Dr. Kirk's paper on the 'Birds of the Zambesi Region' (Ibis, 1864, pp. 307–339), I am much struck with the similarity between some of the Zambesi native names of birds and those applied by the natives of Madagascar to more or less kindred species. For instance, 'Chapungo' the Zambesian name for *Helotarsus ecaudatus,* and 'Papango,' the Malagash name for *Milvus parasiticus*; 'Sungwe,' the Zambesian for *Nectarinia amethystina,* and 'Schonwee,' the Malagash for *Nectarinia angladiana*; 'Khanga,' Zambesian for *Numida mitrata,* and 'Akonga,' Malagash for *Numida tiarata*; 'Soriri,' Zambesian for *Dendrocygna personata,* and 'Chururu,' Malagash for *Dendrocygna viduata*—the last, evidently, from its cry. It certainly shows the African descent of a portion of the population of Madagascar; and the language is probably kept up by occasional fresh importations of slaves from the continent."

It gives us sincere satisfaction to announce that Mr. Gould has in preparation a 'Handbook of the Birds of Australia,' the first volume, at least, of which we may hope to see published in the course of a few months. As all our readers know—and many of them from their own experience—it has long been a matter of regret that no handy book on the ornithology of the great island-continent existed; and the recent appearance of Dr. Jerdon's work on the 'Birds of India' has only made the want of such a book more deeply felt. This want it is Mr. Gould's intention to supply, and we need scarcely say that there is no ornithologist living who is so competent to the task. The new Handbook will not be merely a reprint of the letter-press from the author's well-known and larger work on the 'Birds of Australia'—but will contain much more original information on the subject, which has been furnished him by his numerous correspondents in that country, as well as a good deal of other material from independent sources. We are sure that the execution of this project will add largely to the obligations under which naturalists lie to Mr. Gould; while we think we can as confidently rely on its success, in whatever aspect it be regarded.

Professor S. F. Baird informs us that Mr. R. Kennicott, whose oological explorations in Arctic America have before been noticed in the 'Ibis' (1860, p. 309; 1862, p. 307), is starting on another enterprise. "He has always wished to make a journey up the Pacific to Russian America, and is now about realizing the expectation under very favourable auspices. He goes out in March with a party of the surveyors of the line of the Russian-American Overland Telegraph Company, to San Francisco, and will thence proceed in a Government steamer direct to Norton Sound and the mouth of the Yukon, so as to arrive there about June. He will have a perfect outfit—six companions to aid in collecting—and bids fair to do an enormous business in zoology. He will take six dozen, or more, of egg-drills and pipes, from which you may judge of his 'intentions.' I hope he will happen on the breeding-ground of many rare birds."

We can only say that this adventurous traveller has our best wishes for his success and safe return.

Mr. Frederick Godman has lately left this country to pass a few months in the Azores, investigating their Natural History. Some peculiarities of the avifauna of these islands, the south-western outliers of the Palæarctic Region, have been noticed in a former volume of this Journal (Ibis, 1861, p. 400); and though, doubtless, the Azorean fauna is very limited with regard to species, we entirely concur in the remarks then made, as to the probability of its being found to be very interesting considered in its relation to the faunas of the neighbouring groups of islands and of the continent. Mr. Godman is accompanied by a collector, for whom we trust plenty of work may be found; but we believe our friend is well aware that it is often the *quality*, rather than the *quantity*, of the species collected that is valuable in the present state of science.

Though devoted to another branch of zoology, the writings of Mr. W. S. Macleay, the inventor of the 'Quinary System,' had so much influence on ornithology, that the death of this able naturalist, in Australia, on the 25th of January last, seems to require notice here. We may also mention that Sir Robert Schomburgk, a contributor to the 'Ibis,' and a man who did much to advance the study of Natural History, died at Berlin on the 11th of March.